

**IN THE CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended) An information processing apparatus, comprising:

a customer data unit operable to receive from a user terminal a registration code identifying a purchased product and information relating to a purchaser of the product that are inputted at the user terminal by the purchaser when the purchaser seeks to register the product, to determine whether the registration code is correct, to determine whether a customer identifier is associated with the purchaser information when the registration code is correct, to obtain the customer identifier when the customer identifier is not already associated with the purchaser information, and to store the purchaser information and the registration code in association with the customer identifier;

a questionnaire data storage unit operable to receive ~~and store from the user terminal~~ purchaser responses that the purchaser has inputted at the user terminal in response to a first questionnaire, to store the purchaser responses to the first questionnaire, the first questionnaire being available to the purchaser at a time the purchaser provides the registration code and the purchaser information, to transmit a second questionnaire to the ~~purchaser~~ user terminal at a predetermined time subsequent to the receipt and storage of the registration code and the purchaser information, ~~and to receive and store from the user terminal~~ purchaser responses that the purchaser has inputted at the user terminal in response to the second questionnaire, and to store the purchaser responses to the second questionnaire; and

a questionnaire data processing unit operable to receive the stored purchaser information, registration code

and customer identifier from said customer data unit, to determine whether said questionnaire data storage unit is to transmit an interview questionnaire to the purchaser user terminal based on at least part of the purchaser information, to receive from the user terminal purchaser responses that the purchaser has inputted at the user terminal in response to the interview questionnaire, to combine the purchaser responses to at least one of the first questionnaire, the second questionnaire, and the interview questionnaire with responses obtained from other purchasers, and to output data based on the combined responses.

2. (cancelled)

3. (cancelled)

4. (currently amended) In an information processing apparatus, Aan information processing method, comprising:

receiving, at the information processing apparatus from a user terminal, a registration code identifying a purchased product and information relating to a purchaser of the product that are inputted at the user terminal by the purchaser when the purchaser seeks to register the product;

determining whether the registration code is correct;

determining whether a customer identifier is associated with the purchaser information when the registration code is correct;

obtaining the customer identifier when the customer identifier is not already associated with the purchaser information;

storing the purchaser information and the registration code in association with the customer identifier;

receiving, and storing at the information processing apparatus from the user terminal, purchaser responses that

the purchaser has inputted at the user terminal in response to a first questionnaire, the first questionnaire being available to the purchaser at a time the purchaser provides the registration code and the purchaser information;

storing the purchaser responses to the first questionnaire;

transmitting a second questionnaire to the purchaser user terminal at a predetermined time subsequent to the receipt and storage of the registration code and the purchaser information;

receiving, and ~~storing~~ at the information processing apparatus from the user terminal, purchaser responses that the purchaser has inputted at the user terminal in response to the second questionnaire;

storing the purchaser responses to the second questionnaire;

determining whether to transmit an interview questionnaire to the purchaser user terminal based on at least part of the purchaser information;

receiving, at the information processing apparatus from the user terminal, purchaser responses that the purchaser has inputted at the user terminal in response to the interview questionnaire;

combining the purchaser responses to at least one of the first questionnaire, the second questionnaire, and the interview questionnaire with responses obtained from other purchasers; and

outputting data based on the combined responses.

5. (currently amended) A ~~recording~~ computer-readable medium recorded with a ~~computer-readable program~~ instructions for carrying out an information processing method in an information processing apparatus,, said method comprising:

receiving, at the information processing apparatus

from a user terminal, a registration code identifying a purchased product and information relating to a purchaser of the product that are inputted at the user terminal by the purchaser when the purchaser seeks to register the product;

determining whether the registration code is correct;

determining whether a customer identifier is associated with the purchaser information when the registration code is correct;

obtaining the customer identifier when the customer identifier is not already associated with the purchaser information;

storing the purchaser information and the registration code in association with the customer identifier;

receiving, and storing at the information processing apparatus from the user terminal, purchaser responses that the purchaser has inputted at the user terminal in response to a first questionnaire, the first questionnaire being available to the purchaser at a time the purchaser provides the registration code and the purchaser information;

storing the purchaser responses to the first questionnaire;

transmitting a second questionnaire to the purchaser user terminal at a predetermined time subsequent to the receipt and storage of the registration code and the purchaser information;

receiving, and storing at the information processing apparatus from the user terminal, purchaser responses that the purchaser has inputted at the user terminal in response to the second questionnaire;

storing the purchaser responses to the second questionnaire;

determining whether to transmit an interview

questionnaire to the ~~purchaser~~user terminal based on at least part of the purchaser information;

receiving, at the information processing apparatus from the user terminal, purchaser responses that the purchaser has inputted at the user terminal in response to the interview questionnaire;

combining the purchaser responses to at least one of the first questionnaire, the second questionnaire, and the interview questionnaire with responses obtained from other purchasers; and

outputting data based on the combined responses.

6. (previously presented) The information processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a customer identifier providing unit operable to receive a request for the customer identifier from said customer data unit, and to provide the customer identifier to said customer data unit in response to the request.

7. (previously presented) The information processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a conversion unit operable to convert the stored purchaser information, registration code, and customer identifier into a format suitable for said questionnaire data processing unit, and to convert the purchaser responses to the at least one of the first questionnaire, the second questionnaire, and the interview questionnaire into the format suitable for said questionnaire data processing unit.

8. (previously presented) The information processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a call center terminal operable to receive a subject of a customer inquiry together with the customer identifier;

a call center database operable to receive the

customer identifier from said call center terminal, to receive the stored purchaser information, registration code and customer identifier from said customer data unit, and to output the purchaser information and the registration code to said call center terminal in response to the received customer identifier; and

an answer collection database operable to receive the subject of the customer inquiry and the customer identifier from said call center terminal, and to determine whether an answer associated with the customer inquiry is recorded in said answer collection database, the determination being based on the subject of the customer inquiry;

said answer collection database, when the associated answer is recorded in said answer collection database, being further operable to increment an inquiry count for the associated answer, to output the associated answer to the customer inquiry to said call center terminal, and to send the customer identifier, the customer inquiry, and the associated answer to said call center data unit;

said call center terminal being further operable to display the associated answer;

said call center database being further operable to store the customer inquiry and the associated answer in correlation with the customer identifier.

9. (currently amended) The information processing apparatus according to claim 8, further comprising:

a call center data processing unit operable to receive the stored customer inquiry and the stored associated answer from said call center ~~database-unit~~, and to combine information based on the customer inquiry and the associated answer with other information based on other customer inquiries and their associated answers that are received from said call center data unit, and to output

data generate and display at least one of (i) a plurality of diagrams that are respectively associated with a plurality of categories of purchased products such that a given one of the plurality of diagrams is associated with a particular one of the plurality of categories of purchased products and depicts proportions of a total number of customer inquiries for that category of purchased product divided according to inquiry subject, (ii) a further diagram representing proportions of a total number of customer inquiries for all of the plurality of categories of purchased products divided according to respective ones of the plurality of categories of purchased products, and (iii) another diagram representing ratios of number of customer inquiries to number of items sold for respective ones of the plurality of categories of purchased products, wherein each one of the plurality of diagrams, the further diagram and the another diagram is based on the combined information.

10. (previously presented) The method according to claim 4, further comprising:

converting the stored purchaser information, registration code, and customer identifier into a suitable format; and

converting the purchaser responses to the one or more of the first questionnaire, the second questionnaire, and the interview questionnaire into the suitable format.

11. (previously presented) The method according to claim 4, further comprising:

receiving, at a call center terminal, a subject of a customer inquiry together with the customer identifier;

receiving, at a call center database, the customer identifier from the call center terminal;

receiving, at the call center database, the stored

purchaser information, registration code and customer identifier;

outputting, from the call center database to the call center terminal, the purchaser information and the registration code in response to the received customer identifier;

receiving, at an answer collection database, the subject of the customer inquiry and the customer identifier from the call center terminal;

determining, at the answer collection database, whether an answer associated with the customer inquiry is recorded in the answer collection database, the determination being based on the subject of the customer inquiry; and

when the associated answer is recorded in the answer collection database,

incrementing, at the answer collection database, an inquiry count for the associated answer,

outputting, from the answer collection database to the call center terminal, the associated answer to the customer inquiry,

displaying the associated answer at the call center terminal,

sending, from the answer collection database to the call center database, the customer identifier, the customer inquiry, and the associated answer, and

storing, at the call center database, the customer inquiry and the associated answer in correlation with the customer identifier.

12. (currently amended) The method according to claim 11, further comprising:

combining, at a call center data processing unit, information based on the customer inquiry and the



associated answer with other information based on other customer inquiries and their associated answers; and

generating and displaying outputting, from at the call center data processing unit, at least one of (i) a plurality of diagrams that are respectively associated with a plurality of categories of purchased products such that a given one of the plurality of diagrams is associated with a particular one of the plurality of categories of purchased products and depicts proportions of a total number of customer inquiries for that category of purchased product divided according to inquiry subject, (ii) a further diagram representing proportions of a total number of customer inquiries for all of the plurality of categories of purchased products divided according to respective ones of the plurality of categories of purchased products, and (iii) another diagram representing ratios of number of customer inquiries to number of items sold for respective ones of the plurality of categories of purchased products, wherein each one of the plurality of diagrams, the further diagram and the another diagram is data-based on the combined information.

13. (previously presented) The recording medium according to claim 5, wherein said method further comprises:

converting the stored purchaser information, registration code, and customer identifier into a suitable format; and

converting the purchaser responses to the at least one of the first questionnaire, the second questionnaire, and the interview questionnaire into the suitable format.

14. (previously presented) The recording medium according to claim 5, wherein said method further comprises:

receiving, at a call center terminal, a subject of a customer inquiry together with the customer identifier;

receiving, at a call center database, the customer identifier from the call center terminal;

receiving, at the call center database, the stored purchaser information, registration code and customer identifier;

outputting, from the call center database to the call center terminal, the purchaser information and the registration code in response to the received customer identifier;

receiving, at an answer collection database, the subject of the customer inquiry and the customer identifier from the call center terminal;

determining, at the answer collection database, whether an answer associated with the customer inquiry is recorded in the answer collection database, the determination being based on the subject of the customer inquiry; and

when the associated answer is recorded in the answer collection database,

incrementing, at the answer collection database, an inquiry count for the associated answer,

outputting, from the answer collection database to the call center terminal, the associated answer to the customer inquiry,

displaying the associated answer at the call center terminal,

sending, from the answer collection database to the call center database, the customer identifier, the customer inquiry, and the associated answer, and

storing, at the call center database, the customer inquiry and the associated answer in correlation with the customer identifier.

15. (currently amended) The recording medium according to

claim 14, wherein said method further comprises:

combining, at a call center data processing unit, information based on the customer inquiry and the associated answer with other information based on other customer inquiries and their associated answers; and

generating and displaying~~outputting, from~~at the call center data processing unit, at least one of (i) a plurality of diagrams that are respectively associated with a plurality of categories of purchased products such that a given one of the plurality of diagrams is associated with a particular one of the plurality of categories of purchased products and depicts proportions of a total number of customer inquiries for that category of purchased product divided according to inquiry subject, (ii) a further diagram representing proportions of a total number of customer inquiries for all of the plurality of categories of purchased products divided according to respective ones of the plurality of categories of purchased products, and (iii) another diagram representing ratios of number of customer inquiries to number of items sold for respective ones of the plurality of categories of purchased products, wherein each one of the plurality of diagrams, the further diagram and the another diagram is~~data-based~~ on the combined information.

16. (currently amended) An information processing system, comprising:

a user terminal operable to display a menu that permits a purchaser to select between registering a purchased product and responding to a first questionnaire, to display one or more screens suitable for obtaining a registration code identifying the purchased product and information relating to the purchaser of the product that are inputted by the purchaser when the purchaser selects

registering the purchased product, to send the registration code and the purchaser information, ~~and to display one or more screens suitable for obtaining responses to the first questionnaire that are inputted by the purchaser when the purchaser selects responding to the first questionnaire,~~ and to send the purchaser responses to the first questionnaire; and

an information processing apparatus including:

a customer data unit operable to receive the registration code identifying the purchased product and the information relating to the purchaser of the product from the user terminal, to determine whether the registration code is correct, to determine whether a customer identifier is associated with the purchaser information when the registration code is correct, to obtain such customer identifier when the customer identifier is not already associated therewith, and to store the purchaser information and the registration code in association with the customer identifier,

a questionnaire data storage unit operable to receive ~~and store~~ the purchaser responses to the first questionnaire from the user terminal, to transmit a second questionnaire to the ~~purchaser~~ user terminal at a subsequent predetermined time, ~~and to receive and store from the user terminal~~ purchaser responses that are inputted at the user terminal by the purchaser in response to the second questionnaire, and to store the purchaser responses to the second questionnaire, and

a questionnaire data processing unit operable to receive the stored purchaser information, registration code and customer identifier from said customer data unit, to determine whether said questionnaire data storage unit is to transmit an interview questionnaire to the purchaser

purchaser user terminal based on at least part of the purchaser information, to receive from the user terminal purchaser responses that the purchaser has inputted at the user terminal in response to the interview questionnaire, to combine the purchaser responses to one or more of the first questionnaire, the second questionnaire, and the interview questionnaire with responses obtained from other purchasers, and to provide data based on the combined responses.

17. (new) The information processing system according to claim 16, wherein said information processing apparatus further comprises:

a call center terminal operable to receive a subject of a customer inquiry together with the customer identifier;

a call center database operable to receive the customer identifier from said call center terminal, to receive the stored purchaser information, registration code and customer identifier from said customer data unit, and to output the purchaser information and the registration code to said call center terminal in response to the received customer identifier; and

an answer collection database operable to receive the subject of the customer inquiry and the customer identifier from said call center terminal, and to determine whether an answer associated with the customer inquiry is recorded in said answer collection database, the determination being based on the subject of the customer inquiry;

said answer collection database, when the associated answer is recorded in said answer collection database, being further operable to increment an inquiry count for the associated answer, to output the associated answer to the customer inquiry to said call center terminal, and to

send the customer identifier, the customer inquiry, and the associated answer to said call center data unit;

said call center terminal being further operable to display the associated answer;

said call center database being further operable to store the customer inquiry and the associated answer in correlation with the customer identifier.

18. (new) The information processing system according to claim 17, wherein said information processing apparatus further comprises:

a call center data processing unit operable to receive the stored customer inquiry and the stored associated answer from said call center database, to combine information based on the customer inquiry and the associated answer with other information based on other customer inquiries and their associated answers that are received from said call center data unit, and to generate and display at least one of (i) a plurality of diagrams that are respectively associated with a plurality of categories of purchased products such that a given one of the plurality of diagrams is associated with a particular one of the plurality of categories of purchased products and depicts proportions of a total number of customer inquiries for that category of purchased product divided according to inquiry subject, (ii) a further diagram representing proportions of a total number of customer inquiries for all of the plurality of categories of purchased products divided according to respective ones of the plurality of categories of purchased products, and (iii) another diagram representing ratios of number of customer inquiries to number of items sold for respective ones of the plurality of categories of purchased products, wherein each one of the plurality of diagrams, the further

Application No.: 09/800,830

Docket No.: SONYJP 3.0-143

diagram and the another diagram is based on the combined information.